

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 were rejected in a Final Office Action dated May 2, 2003. The specification has been amended to better clarify the description of the features of the present invention. Support for the amendments to the specification may be found in Figures 1-6. In addition, claim 1 has been amended to better clarify the novel features of the claimed invention. Support for the amendments may be found in the "Detailed Description of the Invention" and in Figures 1-6. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the following remarks.

I. The Claims Are Neither Disclosed Nor Suggested by the Cited References

Claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Worden et al. (US 4,443,511). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

It was stated in the Office Action that applicants' previous arguments concerning the contours of the Worden et al. reference were not persuasive. Specifically, it was noted that Worden clearly shows the general outline of the surface of a porous hydrophobic film with a thin coating of hydrophilic resin because "...the surface is clearly not featureless, i.e., the amount of coating is not sufficiently thick to mask the contours." It was further noted that there is an apparent discrepancy in the interpretation of the term "contour," in that "...the Examiner believes that in claim 1 the 'contours' of the porous PTFE membrane is the general outline of the surface of a porous hydrophobic film with a thin coating of hydrophilic resin."

Applicants believe that clarification of the wording in the specification, which is clearly supported by the original specification and drawings and does not constitute new matter, overcomes this rejection. Specifically, applicants direct the attention of the Patent Office to Figures 1-6 and the accompanying text. Figures 4-6 clearly show a node and fibril structure of the porous PTFE matrix, and Figures 1-3 show the corresponding coated porous PTFE matrix, wherein the nodes and fibrils are still visible to the naked eye. It is stated at page 15, lines 21-24 that a thin coating film of polyurethane resin had formed over the porous PTFE matrix surface, and that in portions the "...polyurethane resin coating was thin enough that the contours of the porous PTFE film matrix were visible through it." The direct comparison in the Figures of the PTFE matrix before and after coating clearly indicates that the contours refer to the contours

of the matrix, not to the general outline of the surface, as was suggested by the Examiner. Amendments to the specification are consistent with the features shown in the Figures, do not constitute new matter, and better clarify the unique features of the invention. Additionally, amendments to the claims which are consistent with the features shown in Figures 1-3 have been made.

In view of the above, applicants submit that the present claims are neither disclosed nor suggested by the teachings of Worden et al.

II. Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the present invention as defined by claims 1-8 is neither taught nor suggested by any of the references of record. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that these claims are now in form for allowance. If further questions remain, applicants request that the Examiner telephone applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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